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Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOR, PINS, VN, VS
SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT STATEMENT ON NVA OFFENSIVE IN PHUOC LONG

REF: SAIGON'S U900

1. ASKED FOR COMMENT ON SITUATION IN SOUTH VIET-NAM AT NOON BRIEFING JANUARY 3, ANDERSON READ FOLLOWING STATEMENT:

BEGIN TEXT

THE NORTH VIETNAMESE OFFENSIVE IN THE SOUTHERN HALF OF SOUTH VIET-NAM DURING THE PAST MONTH HAS BROUGHT THE SHARPEST ESCALATION IN THE FIGHTING SINCE THE SIGNING OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT AND HAS BROUGHT THE LEVEL OF CASUALTIES AND DESTRUCTION BACK UP TO WHAT IT WAS BEFORE THE AGREEMENT. THE ATTACKS IN PHUOC LONG PROVINCE ARE PARTICULARLY SERIOUS, SINCE BY THE MASSIVE APPLICATION OF
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ARMOR, ARTILLERY AND REGULAR INFANTRY ASSAULTS THE NORTH

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VIETNAMESE HAVE SEIZED CONTROL OF FOUR DISTRICT CAPITALS, WHICH THEY CLEARLY DID NOT CONTROL AT THE TIME OF THE AGREEMENT; AND THEY ARE NOW TRYING TO TAKE THE PROVINCE CAPITAL (SONG BE, WHICH IS SOMETIMES REFERRED TO AS

PHUOC BINH), WHICH IS THEIR FIRST ATTACK ON A PROVINCE CAPITAL SINCE THE SEIZURE OF QUANG TRI DURING THEIR 1972 OFFENSIVE. COMING JUST BEFORE THE SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT, THIS DRAMATICALLY BELIES HANOI'S CLAIMS THAT IT IS THE U.S. AND THE REPUBLIC OF VIET-NAM WHO ARE VIOLATING THE AGREEMENT AND STANDING IN THE WAY OF PEACE.

WE DEPLORE NORTH VIET-NAM'S TURNING FROM THE PATH OF NEGOTIATIONS TO THAT OF WAR, NOT ONLY BECAUSE IT IS A GRAVE VIOLATION OF THE AGREEMENT BUT ALSO BECAUSE OF THE CRUEL PRICE IT IS IMPOSING ON THE CIVILIAN POPULATION OF SOUTH VIET-NAM. IN THIS REGARD, WE CALL ATTENTION TO THE ACTION OF THE VIETNAMESE COMMUNIST REPRESENTATIVES IN SAIGON IN REJECTING AS A "FALSE HUMANITARIAN TRICK" A NOTE WHICH THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT SENT THEM ON JANUARY 2 REQUESTING A MEETING TO WORK OUT A FORMULA FOR SUPPLYING FOOD AND ASSISTANCE TO WOUNDED CIVILIANS IN SONG BE. WE AGAIN VOICE OUR STRONG SUPPORT FOR THE REPUBLIC OF VIET-NAM'S CALL TO THE COMMUNIST SIDE TO REOPEN THE BILATERAL TALKS IN PARIS AND SAIGON WICH ARE MANDATED BY THE PARIS AGREEMENT. END TEXT

2. ASKED WHETHER THE US IS PLANNING TO INVOKE THE SO-CALLED PEACE-KEEPING MACHINERY OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT, OR HAS SENT NOTES TO THE "GUARANTORS" OF THE AGREEMENT, ANDERSON REPLIED THAT HE DID NOT KNOW, BUT -- WHEN PRESSED -- AGREED TO LOOK INTO THE MATTER.

3. QUERIED WHETHER READING THIS STATEMENT IS ALL THE US INTENDS TO DO, OR WOULD IT STUDY ANY ACTION IN REGARD TO THIS MOST SERIOUS SITUATION SINCE THE PEACE AGREEMENT, ANDERSON RESPONDED THAT THE US IS WATCHING THIS SITUATION CAREFULLY, AND REFERRED THE PRESS TO THE STATEMENT ISSUED

BY THE PRESIDENT IN VAIL (WHEN HE SIGNED THE AID BILL) IN WHICH HE ADDRESSED HIMSELF TO VIET-NAM. KISSINGER

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